

OPEN TABLES ECOLOGY

a study in contemporary interaction theory



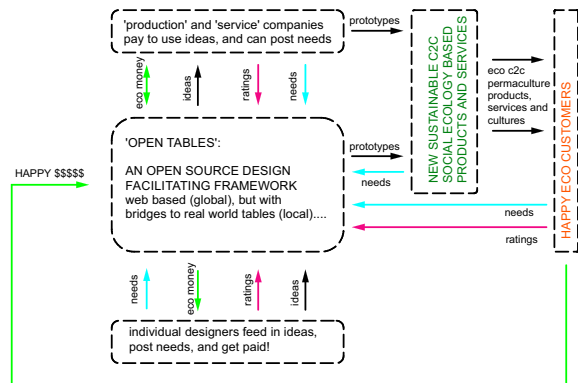
THINKING

We started this project by asking: how can we create a physical space which facilitates the navigation, selection and creation of ideas?

For us, this is in fact part of a bigger study, into creating a hybrid real space/web platform to facilitate the production of open source design (analogous to open source software). We started with the idea of people working around a group of digitally enhanced tables.

The 'ideas ecology' of these tables is represented by the following diagrams:

Working with C21 paradigms: shareware, distributed intelligence, co-design, global-local, new money:



We soon realised that the 'table' concept needed to be developed further. We should tell you at this point that the design team is a collaboration between an architectural practice, and a few 'fellow travellers' that we picked up on the way (including a software designer). We collaborated through a web2 wiki-like application. Here are a few outtakes from the discussion at that point:

DISCUSSIONS

WL Thu, 15 May 2008 at 7:45pm

Just a few thoughts ...
 whether the discussion/exchange platform takes the form of a table or wall seems to determine (or be determined by) the scale of the project and participation, a table exceeding a certain dimension becomes a barrier between people, whereas a wall/vertical 'table' is better for display of information and to reach a large group of audience, but then the participation becomes less direct/physical/intimate or more textual.
 what makes people want to physically participate in a creative process?
 what's the benefit to have a physical/spatial interface larger than a personal computer?
 is there a hierarchy/priority between physical and remote input?
 how are they integrated? how are they different?
 can architecture actually facilitate that process or is it a purely technological problem?

FB Fri, 16 May at 10:50am

you are opening up the horizon way much more than originally perceived...
 the table approach is much more the collaborative meeting-like quality, whereas the wall is more aggregational, "tagging"-like (come along and leave a message, a tag, something) and qualifies for more artistic, or even participatory political interaction.
 the benefit of a spatial space vs. a computer is the much more genuinely natural feeling approach of working and interacting, it's opening up to more human interaction vs. staring at a screen.
 I think architecture then becomes very influential in creating an appropriate environment - depending on the application(?). So definitely, the output needs to be defined, but I think we can approach it in a kind of scenario thinking, create a scenario, and go for it.

FV Fri, 16 May at 3:28pm

...two issues: Interaction and Observation
 Table being the interactive element whilst the Walls are where the information is presented, clustered.
 It also works well with the concept of cluster where people may work in a group of 4 or 2 - collaboration with remote users. Agree with tagging concept of walls ...maybe when Ideas are tagged, they are moved to the walls for observation and further inspiration.
 So, concepts:
 Cluster: Information and Users
 Users can be clustered via "movable" elements - modules
 Information/Ideas is clustered in Walls.
 Ideas are generated on tables and tagged to be "stored" into walls. They can be then brought back to the table for further discussion and tagging.

Other conversations considered the specific scenario that we will create for this particular manifestation of 'Open Tables'. The public newspaper stands of Russia provide an interesting typological precedent for the kind of social space we are after..

Other conversations focused on the technology that we would use... we have adapted the Nintendo Wii interface together with digital projectors, in the ways suggested by interaction guru Johnny Wai on Youtube, as one primary interaction medium. We have had discussions with the PR agents of Panasonic projectors who are keen to supply projectors for the installation.



Finally, we discussed how to recycle found objects (bought second hand etc), as the basis of the 'tables' and 'walls'.

There are three layers structuring the piece.

1: ARCHETYPAL SPACE: this is the basic way that the space is organised into places for individuals, small groups and passing spectators

2: HYBRID OBJECTS: these are found and recycled everyday objects, physically and technologically manipulated and adjusted to create usable hybrid objects which channel and interface RSS feeds. These are categorised as 'Wall-Objects' and 'Table-Objects'. These objects are used to display, interact with or take projections of Live RSS feeds

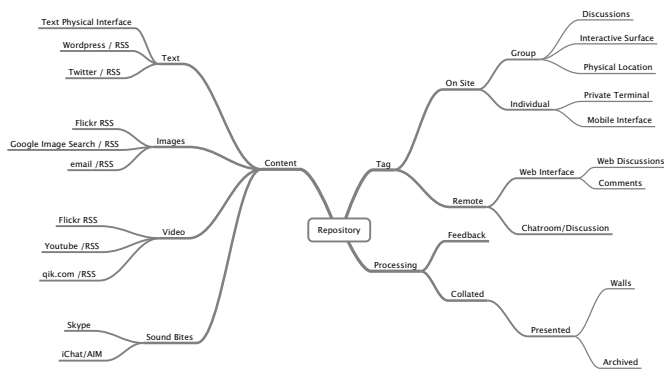
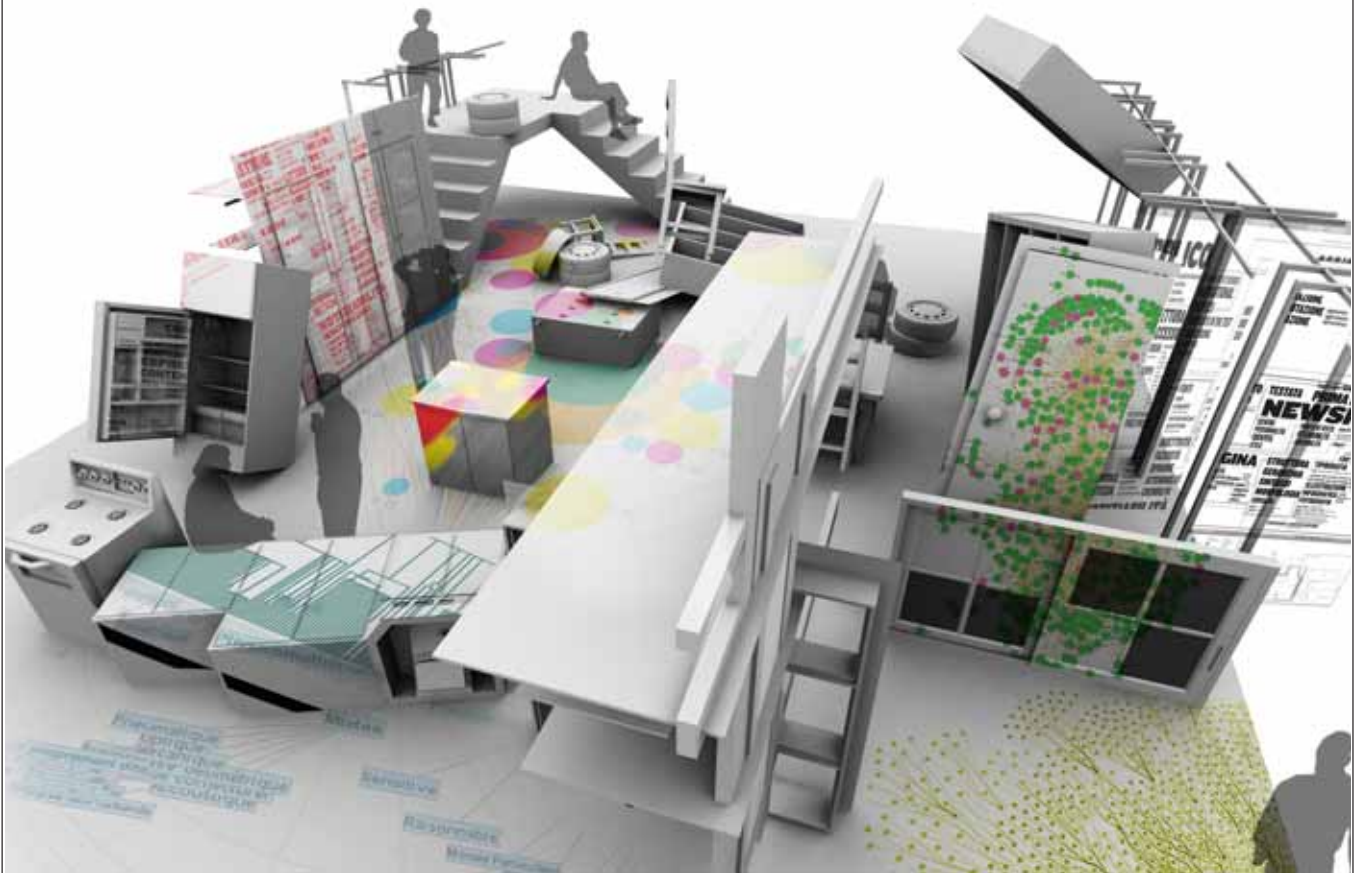
COMPANY/GROUP/DESIGNER'S NAME:	WORKING ARCHITECTURE GROUP
CONTACT NAME:	JON GOODBUN
COUNTRY:	UK
EMAIL:	JON@WAG-ARCHITECTURE.CO.UK
WEBSITE:	WWW.WAG-ARCHITECTURE.CO.UK
TELEPHONE:	+44 (0)20 73772423
MOBILE:	+44 (0)79 49211967
BOARD #:	1 / 3

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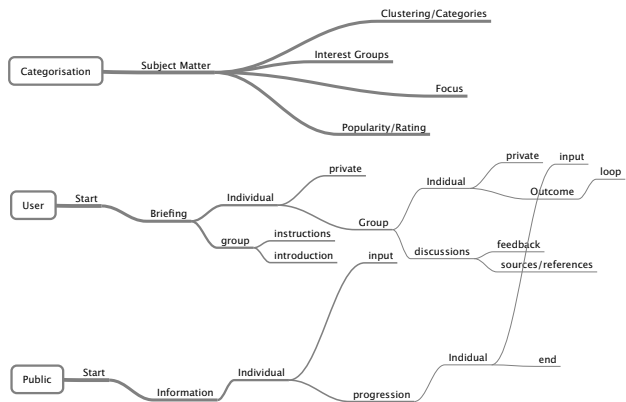


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The **Repository flow diagram** shows how information media are fed into the system. For example, a workgroup at one of the tables or 'table-objects' start writing some ideas. The computer identifies keywords in the text, and starts to search the various RSS feeds shown on the left for posts tagged with the keywords. As these feeds start to display or get projected onto the various table-objects, the workgroups can tag and cross reference them. This primary amended content then gets displayed on the walls and wall-objects, to be seen and responded to by the larger community.



The **Categorisation flow diagram** suggests how content will be clustered into interest areas within the installation, so that workgroups and individuals with similar interests will be attracted to each other.

The **User and Public flow diagrams** suggest the informational journeys that occupants go through.

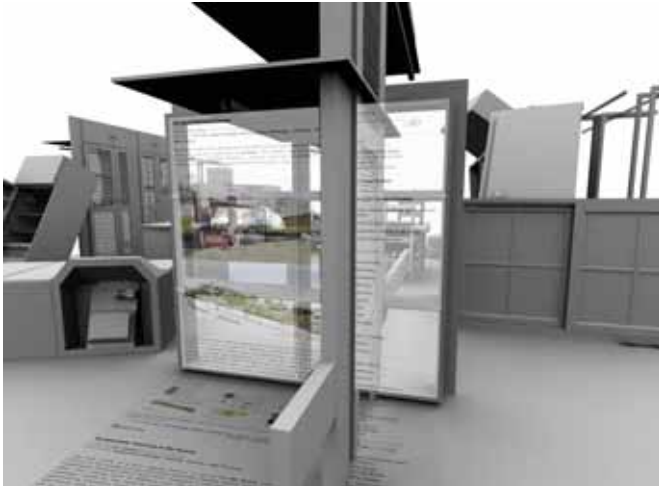
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COUNTRY:	UK
EMAIL:	JON@WAG-ARCHITECTURE.CO.UK
WEBSITE:	WWW.WAG-ARCHITECTURE.CO.UK
TELEPHONE:	+44 (0)20 73772423
MOBILE:	+44 (0)79 49211967
BOARD #:	2 / 3

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CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

1. THE FUNDING

First, we get the money.



2. SHOPPING

..then we go shopping in architectural salvage yards, searching for quality objects which lend themselves for use as i: projection screens or frames for digital display (such as old picture frames, tvs, mirrors etc), ii: objects which can store more discrete displays and messages (old school desks, cupboards etc), and iii: objects which have the insides of a wii stick incorporated into them (old fountain pens, snooker cues, umbrellas etc

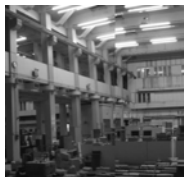


in builders merchants we always where possible source materials (and design structures) according to Cradle 2 Cradle principles.

Cradle 2 Cradle thinking, initially developed by Michael Braungart and William McDonough, is concerned with material flows. C2C argues that if we are to implement One Planet thinking, then we need to shift from a manufacturing system which produces vast quantities of landfill waste, to a model where nothing goes into landfill, but is rather part of one of two cycles: the Biological Metabolism or the Technical Metabolism.

3. WORKSHOPS

We have access as academic researchers to a number of excellent workshops over the summer. We would use these to 'technologically adjust' the recycled objects. The main supporting structures would be prefabricated by joiners off site.

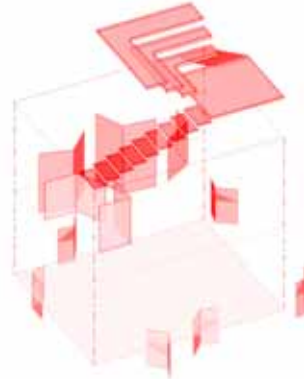


4. TRANSPORT

The objects and structures are designed for easy transport



CONSTRUCTION METHOD



Isonometric



Plan

First, the basic prefabricated supporting structure, which defines the 'archetypal space' (stairs, platforms etc) is installed. 6hrs

Second, the prepared recycled objects are installed according to prepared plan of works 12 hrs (end of day 1)

Thirdly, final dressings, furnishings and projectors are installed 6 hrs

Finally, the systems are tested 12 hrs

COMPANY/GROUP/DESIGNER'S NAME:	WORKING ARCHITECTURE GROUP
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WEBSITE:	WWW.WAG-ARCHITECTURE.CO.UK
TELEPHONE:	+44 (0)20 73772423
MOBILE:	+44 (0)79 49211967
BOARD #:	3 / 3

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